

## PUBLIC LIBRARY A CIVIC INVESTMENT

A Veteran Soldier and Librarian  
speaks Hopefully of Library  
Progress in the State.

Editor's Note:—Announcements since the first of January in the State press of plans for the material enlargement of the libraries in Reidsville, Kinston, and New Bern whereby they will become free circulating libraries, emphasize the fact that North Carolina's reading public is growing. Of the State's even one hundred towns having, according to the census of 1910, a population of from 1,000 to 34,000, thirty-one have public or semi-public libraries. The literary renaissance, of which Dr. Archibald Henderson spoke so forcibly in his recent address before the Woman's Club of Raleigh, can in part be hastened by a more general extension of the public library work in North Carolina. To this end the following article, from "New York Libraries" adopted by Dr. Louis R. Wilson, of the Library of the University of North Carolina, will merit the consideration of the other sixty-nine towns as it presents in a very novel light the services which a modern, progressive public library renders a community. It should be read, in connection with the public library law of the State, which is appended to this article, and it should lead to the multiplication of libraries and the extension of library benefits throughout the State.)

**The Library a Public Investment.**—A tax for the support of a public library is usually regarded merely as a concession by tax-payers to the intellectual and moral needs of the community, a more or less proper sacrifice for the higher life of the public. Even the most zealous friends of the library, in arguing for its support for an increased income, are usually content to rest its claims entirely on such considerations, assuming that they are worth at least the small sacrifice involved. That the library tax is amply justified on these grounds is evident enough to all who appreciate moral and intellectual values, and it is to be hoped that the library will never fail to make its appeal to these higher interests.

But this is only one-half of its legitimate appeal, and even this half is weakened and compromised by the suppression of the other half—the failure to press home strongly, clearly and confidently the fact that the well-equipped library means not a financial sacrifice, not the expenditure of the people's money for a remote and higher benefit merely, but a financial investment for the community, a sound business proposition from which the people receive back, dollar for dollar, with interest, the money they put into it.

The library is much more than a money-making or a money-saving investment for the community, but it is such an investment just as truly as is a city gas plant or waterworks plant or a sewage disposal plant, the amount of return from the investment in each case depending on the efficiency with which the plant is managed. When the taxpayer is asked for an appropriation for a library, he is not asked to give anything, he is not asked to make a sacrifice for a good cause, he is asked to put his money into an enterprise which guarantees him direct material benefits and from which he cannot help receiving even larger indirect returns.

**Material Profits From the Library.**—These may seem like very strong statements, but they are capable of clear and complete demonstration. Space here is too limited for any adequate treatment of the subject, but the following considerations may be submitted in support of the position taken above:

1. Large business and manufacturing corporations maintain libraries and library experts as a necessary condition of their continued business standing and growth. They know that they must provide for their managers and workmen the best and latest knowledge available in their department of industry, if they are to maintain the necessary degree of business efficiency. The well-conducted city or village library fulfills the same economic function for all the people as does the private business library for the private corporation.

2. Real estate companies or firms exploiting special sections of a city or its suburbs for the sake of selling lots and house, find that the presence of a library adds to the selling value of all their property. They strive with great zeal to secure the location of a proposed branch library in the midst of their property, or, where this is impossible, frequently provide, at their own expense, the lot and desired building. They are not doing this for the higher life of the community, but for a higher profit on their investment.

3. Many cases have been cited and may be verified where cities and villages have saved large sums of money in their public works by the knowledge provided in the public library. There is no more certain way for a city to waste public money than to leave its officers and citizens in ignorance of the attempts, successes and failures of other communities in their public works. It is the business of

the library to make such ignorance impossible, or at least inexcusable.

4. The library is a factor in making all kinds of human effort more productive. Through the information provided by it, fields, farms, orchards, gardens, dairies, poultry yards have increased their yield; two blades of grass have been made to grow where one grew before; factories have enlarged their output, workmen have added to the value of their labors, merchants have made better bargains, advertisements have been made more effective, architects and artisans have made better houses. The librarian of the Springfield City Library, in support of this contention, cites the case of a workman who, through the use of books in his library, added a third to his wages in three months' time, of another boy, who by the same help invented valuable devices for increased output at his mill, of a business man who told him that the library had been worth \$4,000 in cash to him the previous year. He reports that there is not a single trade or vocation in that city which may not receive material aid there, and few that do not receive such aid.

5. The library is a means of conserving and promoting the mental, moral and physical health of the community, and in this capacity yields a positive and material benefit to every tax-payer. Many persons may be found who will testify—and their testimony will be confirmed by physicians—that, by wholesome reading, they have been saved from nervous prostration and possible mental collapse. Many inmates of insane asylums are there because of the emptiness and dreariness of their lives, and there is no question that many might have been saved, and the community saved expense of their care, by means of a good library. The same is equally true of many who have joined the criminal class, and who necessitate the enormous public expense for police, courts, and prisons. Nothing is so expensive for the taxpayer as ignorance, pauperism, degeneracy, crime; nothing yields him such large returns as the money spent for agencies which remove the causes of these. Admittedly all the technical apparatus of library administration is expensive; the Boston Public Library expends every year a quarter of a million dollars for administrative purposes. But the American taxpayer supports this more gladly than any other burden, knowing that the public library is the best weapon against alcoholism and crime, against corruption and discontent, and that the Democratic country can flourish only when the instinct of self-perfection as it exists in every American is thoroughly satisfied.

6. To these considerations must be added the very obvious one that in its use of books the community makes a direct and very material saving through the library. A typical city library of North Carolina has just issued its report for the past year, showing receipts from taxation of \$4,000 and a circulation of 36,000 books. If the readers of these books had obtained them by individual purchase it is a fair estimate that they would have spent for them at least \$28,000. Thus by a tax of \$4,000 there is effected a saving to the community of \$24,000; for every dollar of tax, a saving of \$6! This is exclusive of the saving to users of the reference department. Not even an estimate can be given of the amount saved there, but because of the high price of reference books, it is probably equal at least to that of the circulating department. Can any private investment show such financial returns as that rendered by the public library?

The North Carolina Public Law is as follows:

Section 1. The board of aldermen or town commissioners of any incorporated city or town, upon the petition of twenty five per cent of the registered voters thereof, shall submit the question of the establishment of a free public library to the voters at the next municipal election. If a majority of the votes cast on said question be in the affirmative, the board of aldermen or town commissioners shall establish the library or reading room and levy and cause to be collected as other general taxes are collected, a special tax of not more than 10 cents on the hundred dollars of the assessed value of the taxable property of such city or town and not more than thirty cents on the poll. The fund so provided shall constitute the library fund, and shall be kept separate from the other funds of the city or town, to be expended exclusively upon such library.

Sec. 2. For the government of such library, there shall be a board of six trustees appointed by the board of aldermen or town commissioners, chosen from the citizens at large with reference to their fitness for such office; and not more than one member of the board of aldermen or town commissioners shall be at any one time a member of said board. Such trustees shall hold their office for six years from their appointment, and until their successors are appointed and qualified: Provided, that upon their first appointment under this act two members shall be appointed for two years, two for four years, and two for six years, and at all subsequent appointments under this act made every two years, two members shall be appointed for six years. All vacancies shall be immediately reported by the trustees to the board of aldermen or town commissioners and be filled by appointment in like manner, and if in

an unexpired term, for the residue of the term only. The board of aldermen or town commissioners may remove any trustee for incapacity, unfitness, misconduct, or for neglect of duty. No compensation shall be allowed any trustee.

Sec. 3. Immediately after the appointment, such board of trustees shall organize by electing one of its members as president and one as secretary-treasurer, and such other officers as it may deem necessary. The secretary-treasurer, before entering upon his duties, shall give bond to the municipality in an amount fixed by the board of trustees, conditioned for the faithful discharge of his official duties. The board shall adopt such by-laws, rules and regulations for its own guidance and for the government of the library as may be expedient and conformable to law. It shall have exclusive control of the expenditure of all moneys collected for or placed to the credit of the library fund, and of the supervision, care, and custody of the rooms or building constructed, leased, or set apart for library purposes. But all moneys received for such library shall be paid into the city treasury, be credited to the library fund, be kept separate from other moneys, and be paid out to the secretary-treasurer upon the authenticated requisition of the board of trustees through its proper officers. With the consent of the board of aldermen or town commissioners it may lease and occupy, or purchase, or erect upon ground secured through gift or purchase an appropriate building: Provided, that of the income for any one year not more than half may be employed for the purpose of making such lease or purchase or for erecting such building. It may appoint a librarian, assistants, and other employees, and prescribe rules for their conduct, and fix their compensation, and shall also have power to remove such appointees. It may also extend the privileges and use of such library to non-residents upon such terms and conditions as it may prescribe.

Sec. 4. All property given, granted, conveyed, donated, devised, or bequeathed to, or otherwise acquired by any city or town for a library shall vest in, and be held in the name of such city or town, and any conveyance, grant, donation, devise, bequest or gift made to or in the name of any public library board shall be deemed to have been made directly to such city or town.

Sec. 5. With the consent of the board of aldermen or town commissioners, expressed by ordinance or resolution, and within the limitations of this act as to the rate of taxation, the library board may accept any gift, grant, devise or bequest made or offered by any person for library purposes, and may carry out the conditions of such donations. And the city or town in all such cases is authorized to acquire a site, levy a tax, and pledge itself by ordinance or resolution to a perpetual compliance with all the terms and conditions of the gift, grant, devise or bequest so accepted.

Sec. 6. Every library established under this act shall be forever free to the use of the inhabitants of the city or town, subject to such reasonable regulations as the board of trustees may adopt.

Sec. 7. On or before the thirty-first day of December of each year the said board of trustees shall make a report to the board of aldermen or town commissioners, stating the condition of their trust, the various sums of money received from the library fund and all other sources, and how much money has been expended, the number of books and periodicals on hand, the number added during the year, the number lost or missing, the number of registered users of such library, with such other statistics, information and suggestions as it may deem of general interest.

Sec. 8. The board of aldermen or town commissioners of such city or town shall have power to pass ordinances imposing suitable penalties for the punishment of persons committing injury upon such library or the grounds or other property thereof, or for any injury to, or for failure to return any book, plate, picture, engraving, map, magazine, pamphlet or manuscript belonging to such a library.

Sec. 9. If there exists in any incorporated city or town a secular or non-sectarian library owned and controlled by a society or corporation, the board of aldermen or town commissioners, when deemed best for the interest of the city or town, may levy and collect the tax herein provided for, and, in lieu of supporting and maintaining a public library, enter into a contract with such society or corporation for the purpose of providing the inhabitants of such city or town with the free use of such library upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon between the board of aldermen or town commissioners and the society or corporation: Provided, always, that all money paid to such society or corporation under said contract shall be expended solely for the maintenance of such library, and for no other purpose.

Sec. 10. That nothing in this act shall be construed to abolish or in anywise abridge any power or duty conferred upon any public library established by virtue of any city or town charter or other special act.

Sec. 11. This act shall be in force from and after its ratification.

Ratified March 4, 1911.

## RAPER'S "RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION"

A Valuable Work Which Dr. Charles  
L. Raper Has Based on Hadley's  
"Railroad Transportation."

In this solid and timely account of railway transportation, recently published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, the author of "Principles of Wealth and Welfare" has performed a desirable public service. There is no question that accurate and recent information about railway transportation is of immense value to every student and teacher of economics and to every man, in public or in private life, who would understand in any degree some of the most vital of modern questions.

The reason for the existence of the book is stated by the author in his preface. "So great has been the development of railway transportation, and so important have been the laws of the State's relation to it, since President Hadley's book was written, in 1885, that it is vitally necessary to bring the statement down to the present. The last quarter of a century has been so full of significant change, that it must necessarily be included in any work on railways."

"Railway Transportation," as the author explains, is not a mere revision, but "a new book, even in that part which treats of the early years, though it is, with his permission, based upon Hadley's 'Railroad Transportation'—a work so admirable that it deserves to live as long as railways are the subject of serious study. Its chief purpose is to revise and enlarge Hadley's book."

Dr. Raper has traced the history of railway transportation in Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and the United States. The first chapter, "Modern Transportation," shows in a general way how the railway has come into existence and has assumed a tremendously important part in modern life. The next three chapters discuss various phases of railway transportation in Great Britain, including development of the lines, general conditions of traffic, passenger service and rates, freight service and rates, and ideals and machinery of state control. The next two chapters deal with the most vital aspects of railway transportation in France. Two chapters are devoted to Italian railways, and three to German railway history and conditions. The chapters which are concerned with railway transportation in the United States are five in number and occupy a hundred pages, nearly a third of the entire book. The topics discussed are development of the lines, speculation, State aid, competition and combination, general conditions of traffic, passenger service and rates, freight service and rates, theory of rates, and ideals and machinery of State control.

The concluding chapter, "State Operation of Railways," is divided into the following parts: "Reasons," "Methods," "History," and "General Results." The third part of this chapter discusses briefly the history of state operation of railways in Belgium, Austria, Italy, France, and Germany. An interesting part of the same chapter is headed "Extension of the Parcel Post, Not State Operation in the United States."

The characteristic of the book, even in the passages which relate to the historical development of railroads, is that the author has written not for the antiquarian or the historian but "solely to throw light upon the present management and regulation of the railways." The spirit of criticism which runs through the book gives vitality to what might well be a mere narrative of things well enough forgotten. The science which was once misnamed the "dismal science" has risen into both honor and popularity. That a North Carolina professor has made an important contribution to so interesting a field of economic thought as railway transportation is another sign that the old State is waking up. That North Carolina should get as rapidly as possible into the current of the world's thought—in economics no less than in literature and philosophy—is a thing which is on all accounts desirable.

G. S.

"RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION, A History of Its Economics and of the Relation to It of the State and of the Nation. Based, with the author's permission, upon Hadley's 'Railroad Transportation, Its History and Its Laws.' By Charles Lee Raper, Professor of Economics and Dean of the Graduate School, University of North Carolina. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.50 net.